

Today the House of Representatives voted on [H.R. 1913](#), the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which would make local violent crime prosecutable as a federal "hate crime" if the crime is "motivated by prejudice based on the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability of the victim." Importantly, the measure does not define the terms "sexual orientation" and "gender identity."

I strongly oppose this legislation and voted against it, because it puts at risk the constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech, religious expression, and equal protection under the law. The legislation takes the dangerous course of criminalizing thought. This means that victims of crimes allegedly motivated by certain prejudices would be given more consideration and attention than victims of crimes motivated by greed or a general desire to inflict pain. I believe all violent crimes are unacceptable and should be punished firmly and fairly.

I'm also deeply troubled that the measure could subject religious leaders or groups to criminal investigations or prosecutions for nothing more than expressing their constitutionally-protected beliefs. In the event of another ballot initiative like last year's Proposition 8 debate, under the legislation passed by the House today, individuals who speak out against certain behavior could potentially be accused of "hate speech," which in turn could lead to allegations of "hate crime" offenses.

We can not eliminate hate through legislation. Every violent crime is devastating not only to the victims, but to the community whose public safety has been violated. I believe we must pursue the equal and vigorous prosecution of all crimes-regardless of motivation-and ensure that all lives carry the same sacred value.